

Elmhurst gets \$10 million grant for Metra station upgrades

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Elmhurst has been awarded a \$10 million federal grant to help pay for plans to rebuild its downtown Metra station.

City officials announced the grant from the federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program in a statement released Tuesday.

"The Elmhurst Metra station has more than 2,300 weekday boardings with a projected 30 percent increase in ridership in the next 20 years," the statement reads. "The proposed improvements will not only provide needed capacity increases at the train station, and improve the commuter experience, but also improve multi-modal transit accessibility to it and around it."

Built in the 1960s, the station last was renovated in the 1990s. The current proposal is the result of a lengthy process that involved residents and the design firm CDM Smith.

The plan calls for a 2,400-square-foot building on the inbound side of the tracks. The structure would feature a 1,100-square-foot waiting area, Ada-approved accessible washrooms, and a small office for ticket sales.

A building on the outbound side of the tracks would cover 450 square feet with a waiting room.

The existing pedestrian tunnel is accessible only by stairs, so officials would like to build a second tunnel that could be used by bicyclists and people in wheelchairs.

Officials also said dedicated bus and vehicular drop-off zones are proposed to reduce traffic congestion during peak hours.

Increased bike parking and improved pedestrian crossings and sidewalks also are proposed. In addition, officials said, the improvements would create more green space, reducing stormwater runoff.

The \$10 million grant will provide part of what's needed to pay for the project. The city is continuing to apply for additional grants.

The final plan for the project is expected to be completed next year. Construction is expected to begin in 2019.